

Lab chief sets prices for FY 2001; pledges to satisfy customer needs

New prices for laboratory analyses for FY2001 were announced July 26 by Gregory Mohrman, Chief, NWQL. Publication of the price list was delayed, said Mohrman, because significant changes to the pricing structure were being developed, and NWQL facility-cost decisions were being made. The new price list applies to all samples logged in at the NWQL on or after October 1, 2000.

An overall 8-percent price increase for FY01 was decided in discussions with the Office of Water Quality and the Water Resources Division. Selected parameter (lab code) and schedule prices have risen by as much as 15 percent or decreased by up to 10 percent. "The prices reflect our decision to implement a new pricing model and to evaluate its effectiveness," said Mohrman.

The NWQL Chief said the pricing list is based on an extensive analysis of the actual cost to produce data in the laboratory. Mohrman said the new pricing strategy continues to undergo review and revision as "we gain experience and confidence in its ability to accurately reflect our business needs. The long-term benefit to you, the customer, is that we now have a powerful tool to help us assess where we need to be more efficient and target areas for product development and improvement."

Low-demand methods, defined as those for which the NWQL has less than 50 organic or less than 250 inorganic requests per year, will now be considered as "custom." These methods and schedules are still included in the price list, but the cost is presented as \$9999. Customers will need to contact the NWQL for specific pricing quotes. The newly defined custom lab codes will be removed from all existing schedules. Therefore, customers who have been using inorganic chemistry schedules that contain custom lab codes will need to contact the laboratory to find an alternate method or to set up a custom proposal. NWQL staff is prepared to assist with identifying other lab codes or schedules that may be substituted, if available, and to provide customers with a price quote on a case-by-case basis. "The goal is to work with individual customers to meet their analytical needs with the most cost efficiency," said Mohrman.

In his cover letter releasing the new prices, Mohrman stated: "Our commitment to you--our customer--is that we will aggressively seek to be the most efficient laboratory operation that we can be. With this commitment comes the challenge we have made to ourselves to continuously seek ideas, methods, and processes that will reduce our costs, thereby benefiting our customers. We also commit ourselves to provide superior quality laboratory analyses and support services. We will listen and respond to current and future needs as we strive to be your water laboratory of choice."

Direct specific customer service questions and inquiries as follows:

- **Organic Analysis**
Mark Burkhardt (303) 236-3250; email mrburk@usgs.gov or
Ralph White (303) 236-3251; email wrwhite@usgs.gov
- **Inorganic Analysis**
Mark Burkhardt (303) 236-3250; email mrburk@usgs.gov or
Harold Ardourel, (303) 236-3151; email ardourel@usgs.gov
- **Biological Analysis**
Steve Moulton, (303) 236-3493; email moulton@usgs.gov or
Marcia Siebenmann, (303) 236-3491; email msieben@usgs.gov
- **Radiochemistry**
Ann Mullin, (303) 236-3480; email ahmullin@usgs.gov or
Mark Burkhardt, (303) 236-3250; email mrburk@usgs.gov
- **Laboratory Schedules**
Steve Glodt, (303) 236-3721; email srglodt@usgs.gov

For questions and answers regarding analytical prices, visit the NWQL Home Page Web site at URL
<http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/faq.html>.

StarLIMS team leader named

Lab Chief Greg Mohrman has named Michael P. Pantea to be team leader for coordinating and implementing the Laboratory Information Management System (StarLIMS). The 6-month detail was effective October 1. Pantea is a geologist/systems engineer in the Geologic Division at the Denver Federal Center.

Pantea is charged with bringing StarLIMS on line at the earliest possible date. He will be coordinating internal and external issues, including maintenance liability, future needs, overall objectives, and long-range planning. He has an extensive background in information technology, geology, biology, mapping, and has worked as a geochemist in a wet lab.



Pantea can be contacted as follows: telephone 303-236-5554; E-mail mpantea@usgs.gov, Denver Federal Center, Bldg. 95, MS 407.

Frequently asked questions

How do I determine the status of my samples?

Send E-mail to GS-W-Coden NWQL DenADP and include the station, date, time, and schedules or lab codes of interest. If the samples have been completed and released, GS-W-Coden NWQL DenADP will re-release the results.

I think my samples were involved in a bottle mix-up. What do I do?

Send E-mail to GS-W-Coden NWQL DenQC and include the station, date, time, and schedules or lab codes involved. The bottle information, if available, will be verified against the information on the analytical service request (ASR) form. If there is a bottle mix-up, the bottles will be relogged and the original, incorrect data will be flagged in the NWQL data base as nonpreferred.

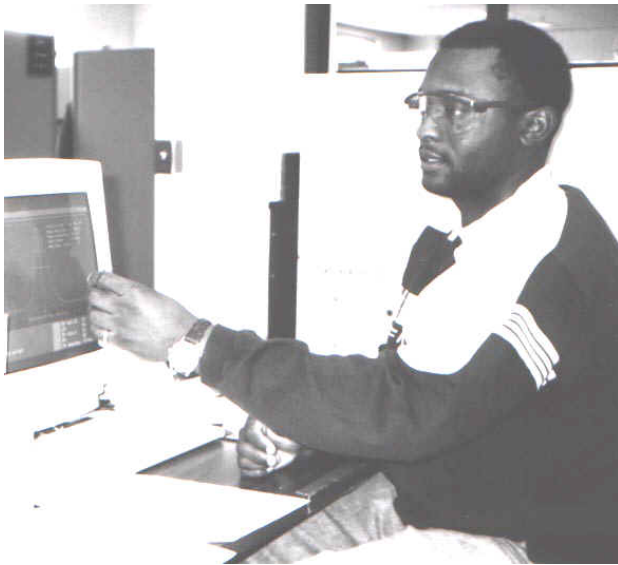
Help! I've already mailed my samples to NWQL and just realized that I don't have sufficient funds to cover the cost of analysis. How do I cancel an analytical request?

Send e-mail to GS-W-Coden NWQL DenADP and include station, date, time, and schedules or lab codes and request a cancellation. If the sample has not been analyzed, the request will be cancelled and the project account will receive a credit. If the NWQL has processed the sample, a charge will apply and the project account will be debited.

In the last retrieval, our District received another District's data. How do the results get to the correct District?

If you received data in error, send e-mail to GS-W-Coden NWQL DenADP and include the station, date, and time. Request a review of the ASR and correction of the user code. Billing corrections might be required, also.

💧 Allison Brigham and Kathy Bryant



Checking Profiles--*LeJuan Ray, physical science technician in the Plasma Unit, checks computer profiles of various elements prior to analyzing water samples with an inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometer.*

Lab tours provide popular destination

The NWQL hosted a tour by Representative Bob Schaffer's (R-CO-4th) district director, Ms. Marge Klein, and two district staffers (Ms. Debbie Stromby and Ms. Mary Hunter) on August 23. The tour was arranged through Dave Ozman of the Central Region Office of Public Affairs.

The tour focused on providing a general overview of the NWQL. The tour started in Log-in and proceeded with a generalized description of how the NWQL operates to support the USGS mission. All of the visitors seemed impressed with the technology and were particularly interested in understanding the amount of data produced at the Lab.

Also on August 23, the NWQL hosted a tour by Ms. Michelle Jespersen (Office of Management and Budget), who was accompanied by Wendy Norton and Susan Collier (USGS). The tour supported a series of talks given by staff of the Colorado District and National Water-Quality Assessment Program prior to the visitors' arrival at the Laboratory.

Dave Ozman, Randy Olson, and Cassy Mitchell joined the tour group for lunch. The lunch break gave Lab staff an opportunity to discuss how the NWQL is funded, review sample-loading, point out Building 95 design features, and offer a brief history. The visitors toured the Log-in area and then were shown the analytical systems that produce data for the nutrient and MTBE analyses.

After a visit to the Biological Group, the visitors toured Ed Furlong's research laboratory.

On August 25, Mr. Bob Faber, staff director for the House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power, visited the NWQL. Tour guides gave Mr. Faber a detailed look at how organic analytical work is carried out and provided an introduction to methods development. Faber expressed strong interest in the work at NWQL and requested additional information on USGS research involving emerging contaminants.



Merle Shockey

Letters, Faxes, and E-mail

Tour De Force

I want to thank all of you who participated in last week's briefings for Michelle Jespersen, Susan Collier, and myself. The week's activities in Albuquerque and Denver involved many people from all USGS disciplines, yet everything ran smoothly. You did an absolutely spectacular job of tying everything together to give us a comprehensive picture of USGS programs and activities. From my own perspective, it was great to see how the geologic, biologic, and geographic work of USGS fits together with the water programs I was already familiar with. It was also wonderful to see participation by some of our Federal partners and non-Federal cooperators. It says a great deal about USGS' relationship with its customers, that people like Terry Terrell, Larry Gambel, Doug Cain, and Linda Logan were willing to take time from their busy schedules to be with us.

Again and again during the week, I heard people talking about interdisciplinary science, and it was good to see how much collaboration is occurring. You gave us a wonderful opportunity to see the linkages between our programs, which are a clear reflection of the linkages in the Earth's natural systems.

Above all, your enthusiasm for your work was hugely inspiring. Those of us in Reston don't get out to the field often enough, and it's refreshing to be able to talk face to face with the people who do the real work of the USGS.

Wendy Norton
USGS, Reston
August 31, 2000

Dear Wendy and all of you who worked to make Michelle's visit a success:

I want to thank all of you who helped with Michelle Jespersen's recent visit to the Denver area. I just spoke with her on the phone and she was clearly very enthused and excited about her visit, including the people she met and the work she saw the USGS doing. Thanks!

Thomas Casadevall
USGS, Denver
August 31, 2000

Technical Review

The Branch of Quality Systems (BQS) conducted a technical review of the NWQL during the week of January 24-28. The 10-member audit team was made up of chemists and hydrologists from the Office of Water Quality, District Offices, the National Research Program, and other USGS and State labs.

Audit team findings and Laboratory responses to the findings have been posted on the NWQL Web page at URL <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/Performance/labaudit.html>. The report refers to a number of "attachments" that are not posted on the Web site. The attachments are individual reports prepared by BQS audit team members. LeRoy Schroder used these separate attachments to compile the summary for the audit team findings. Those customers who need a copy of an attachment should contact the BQS schroder@usgs.gov.

We thank LeRoy and the audit team for the constructive review of our operations.

Gregory B. Mohrman
Chief, NWQL

(See adjoining related article.)

Response to audit

The Branch of Quality Systems (BQS) conducted an in-depth technical review of the NWQL, Jan 24-28. The audit was led by LeRoy Schroder (BQS), and conducted by George Aiken, National Research Program (NRP, Colo.), Larry Barber, Colleen Rostad, and David Roth (all with NRP, Colo.), Bill d'Angelo and Mike Meyer (Water Quality Supply Unit, Fla.), Leslie Desimone (Massachusetts District), DeWayne Kennedy-Parker (Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene), and Steven Sorenson (Office of Water Quality, Vir.).

The audit examined all major analytical methods used at the NWQL, including herbicides, pesticides, volatile organic compounds, nutrients, trace metals, and major anions and cations. The analytical systems included gas chromatography, liquid chromatography, inductively coupled plasma-atomic emission spectrometry, and mass spectrometry coupled to these instruments. In addition, various systems, such as colorimetry, graphite furnace-atomic absorption spectrophotometry, and total and dissolved organic carbon, were examined.

There were many minor observations and suggestions from the audit team to help in the production of high-quality environmental water-sample data by the NWQL. The major finding of the audit was lack of thorough documentation for some analytical systems, including analytical methods and Standard Operating Procedures. The NWQL is resolving these documentation issues, many of which already have been corrected. Reviewers also questioned the NWQL's ability to meet National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) standards; the NWQL believes it is currently in position to

meet most of the NELAC standards and to adjust to those standards that are outside routine NWQL practices within a matter of months.

The NWQL welcomes outside audits in its continuing efforts to improve data quality. The technical review report can be accessed through the NWQL home page at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/Performance/labaudit.html>.



Al Driscoll

Schroeder mission to Jeddah

Michael Schroeder, Supervisor, Base Neutral Acid Unit, went to Saudi Arabia in September to assist in developing plans to build an analytical laboratory. He joined Bill Shampine, USGS Office of International Hydrology, which is consulting with the kingdom in efforts to assess water quality. The Saudis are interested in setting up a full-service water-quality laboratory.

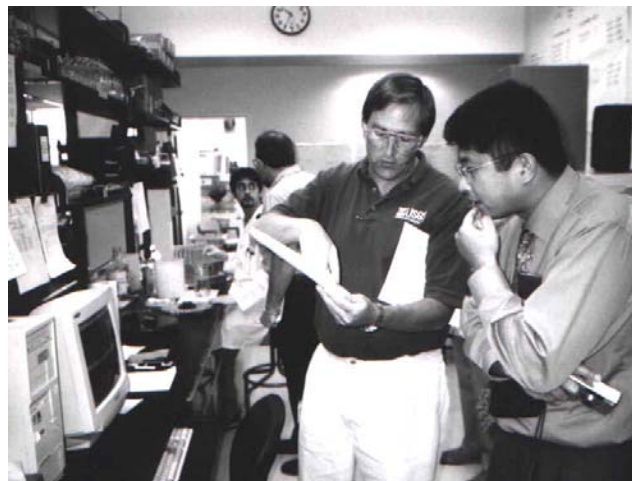
STANDARDIZED ASR FORM IMPLEMENTED BUREAUWIDE

The Office of Water Quality implemented a standardized Analytical Services Request (ASR) form effective October 1. The NWQL reminds its customers to include the following information in order to expedite sample handling and analysis:

- Consistently apply user codes, medium code, and sample types to ensure proper sample login and routing of all sample data and billing information.
- Only include comments to the NWQL in Site/Sample/Special Project Information section.
- Circle A or D fields in the Analytical Work Requests section to indicate if a lab code is to be added or deleted.
- The NWQL Login Comments field under Shipping Information is reserved for internal login comments only.
- Field Comments (see Field Values section) are reserved for field use only.
- Please do not alter the new ASR form.

The NWQL appreciates customers working with the Laboratory to make the transition and sample submissions a success. For questions or comments about the new ASR, contact Will Lanier at 303-236-3710 or E-mail wlanier@usgs.gov. Electronic copies of the new form are available at URL http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS/USGS_srv.html. Also, refer to Office of Water Quality Technical Memorandum 2000.09, which provides details regarding use of the new ASR.

GUEST FROM JAPAN --Tomijiro Kubota, researcher from the Kyushu National Agricultural Experiment Station in Japan, listens intently as Gary Cottrell, supervisory chemist, explains Kjeldahl nitrogen data in the nutrients lab. Kubota made a special trip to Denver, September 20, to visit the NWQL, after attending a conference. Robert Green and Charles Patton, Methods Research and Development Program, also briefed Kubota and took part of the tour.



New publications by Laboratory authors

Reports

Moulton, S.R., II, Carter, J.L., Grotheer, S.A., Cuffney, T.F., and Short, T.M., 2000, Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Processing, taxonomy, and quality control of benthic macroinvertebrate samples: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 00-212, 49 p.

Patton, C.J., and Truitt, E.P., 2000, Methods of analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey National Water Quality Laboratory—Determination of ammonium plus organic nitrogen by a Kjeldahl digestion method and an automated photometric finish that includes digest cleanup by gas diffusion: U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 00-170, 31 p.

Article

Foreman, W.T., Gates, P.M., Foster, G.D., Rinella, F.A., and McKenzie, S.W., 2000, Use of field-applied quality control samples to monitor performance of a Goulden large-sample extractor/GCMS method for pesticides in water: *International Journal of Environmental Analytical Chemistry*, v. 77, no. 1, p. 39-62.

FISCAL YEAR CLOSEOUT

The NWQL closed out its fiscal year (FY) September 15 for receipt of samples. Customers received an additional week for water-year closeout. Final NWQL billings were to be available by September 25. The monthly budget was to be posted via E-mail to all administrative officers in the Water Resources Division.

Any samples or requests for field samples received by the NWQL through close of business September 15 were charged to FY00. Any samples received after that date are being charged to FY01 unless special arrangements were made through the NWQL Administrative Unit. Contact Merilee Bennett (mbennett@usgs.gov) for information or questions.

Newsletter Staff

Jon Raese, Editor
Diana Rime, Production Assistant

The National Water Quality Laboratory Newsletter, is published quarterly by the National Water Quality Laboratory, U.S. Geological Survey, Box 25046, MS-407, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225-0046. For copies, call Diana Rime (303) 236-3502 or send e-mail request to dcrime@usgs.gov.

The purpose of the *National Water Quality Laboratory Newsletter* is to improve communications on water-quality issues in the U.S. Geological Survey. The Newsletter is for administrative use only. It should not be quoted or cited as a publication. The use of trade, product, or firms names in this publication is for descriptive purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Geological Survey. Visit the NWQL Home Page Web site at <http://wwwnwql.cr.usgs.gov/USGS>.
